



SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS



DOUGLAS
LIBRARY

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
AT KINGSTON

KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA

A

LETTER

To a GENTLEMAN at

BRUSSELS,

CONTAINING

An Account of the *C A U S E S* of

The Peoples Revolt

FROM

The CROWN.

L O N D O N,

Printed in the Year MDCLXXXIX.

LETTER

TO THE

OF THE

THE

OF THE

A LETTER to a Gentleman in Brussels, &c.

S I R,

TO gratifie your Request concerning the Violations and Outrages committed on the *English* Government, all of which (as you rightly observe) have had according to their respective proportions a considerable influence towards the present Revolution : I have seriously reflected on these last three years, but to derive them to the original source, I find it of absolute necessity to resort further back, though in common opinion the remoter a cause is the less is its influence, and unthinking men generally imagine the last and next immediate causes of things to be the onely engines and movements deserving of enquiry, but wiser men look further, and can see causes and consequences at a greater distance, and do find it a truth, that false steps in the original and progress may be the true and real causes of the dissolution of a Government, whatsoever was the particular and immediate occasion that overthrew it, as Builders and Surveyors shew their greatest regard to the Foundation, and Physicians to the first Concoction : but in respect of your Inquiry I cannot refuse an agreement with your observation, that it hath not been one or two of the late actions of State, nor the false measures taken at first by the Court of *Car. 2.* but the repeated oppressions of the people of *England*, which from time to time have done their parts to the alienating their affections from the late Government, 'tis all of them together that have wrought this effect.

I will not undertake to enumerate every particular thing that hath contributed to this wonderfull change of our *English*

State, for that would be endless, nor will I pretend to dive into the mysteries, secrets and intrigues of the several Statesmen, for those I do not conceive material to my purpose, for my opinion is, that their clandestine designs (though ill enough God knows, and proceeded from an implacable malice to the true Protestant Religion) were not ingredients in this matter, but the publick actions which they and their instruments and creatures were guilty of: these I say were the things that gradually occasioned this revolt from the King; I shall therefore onely give you some hints of the most notorious acts that did create ill blood from time to time as they were committed, and (no sincere, true, material, or considerable act of policy from the Crown intervening) at last produced those conclusions which we now see. But I know you may object and wonder, how it should come to pass, that these publick actions should be of force to break a Government compact within it self; and especially since the common people who are most affected with these matters have the least share in the Government, and men of greater Figure, who are hereditary constituent parts of the *English* œconomy, they seemed to be little concerned at these things. I answer that the objection is founded on two mistakes: First, the Lords had so much prudence as to conceal their resentments till an opportunity fit in all its circumstances did present it self, and then we found a discovery of their sense more sharp than most men did expect or imagine, for they had a share in the Grievances which I shall mention: And Secondly, the Commons do not make so inconsiderable a part in the Government as is suggested, and for the knowledge of that, you must consider where the strength, power and ballance of *England* lies: I confess there's no Kingdom in Story where and in and about which so much blood hath been spilt as the *English*, but it hath all arisen from the part which hath had the overballance in strength in its opposition to the actual Governours. You know the principal kinds of Rule, *viz.* Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy, of which our Government

vernment is compounded : Now the foundation of this Government at first was the ballance of the Lands, and *England* being a place of Territory more than Trade (though Trade hath in the last Ages much increased) it ever was and will be true that the Land will govern the Government, and the proportion this held formerly, was in the King and Nobles above two thirds, and in the whole people not one third, and for the proof of this let us look back from the Conquest to *Hen. 7.* and thence home; we shall find in the former part that the strength of the Government was in the Church and Nobility, and by that means the two extreams, which are the King and People, were supported and kept in their several proper spheres by the Nobility, and each was thereby defended from the injuries of the other; and 'tis worthy of your consideration, that all the Civil Wars made in those times were by the Barons, and that they always prevailed. But *Hen. 7.* considering how great an overballance the Nobility was, endeavoured the diminution of their strength by giving power to them to alienate their Lands: from this time the Lands began to come into the hands of the people, and the next Age increased the same by the dissolution of Abbeys and Monasteries, so that now above two thirds of the Lands are in the possession of the Commons, and from hence 'tis clear that the strength of the Nation is in the People, and it is easily demonstrated from the one Civil War happened since *Hen. 7.* which they began and in it did prevail. As to *Monmouth's* business it neither had its original nor rise from the People by reason of their general aversion to those who set up as Leaders as persons of no Religion; nor would that have proved so inconsiderable but that the treachery of some of those Leaders prevented the increase of their numbers: Besides, the Commons have acquired no small points from the Crown in the destruction of those slavish dependencies which the tenures of Knights-service occasioned, nor was that point less considerable which was gained in the *Habeas Corpus* Act, by which liberty was easily and certainly secured against the endeavours

endeavours of powerfull Secretaries, who generally crampt all apposition to their Court-projects by tedious and long imprisonments. And'tis observable that ever since the Restoration the Commons House hath always got ground on the Lords in all disputes about Jurisdiction, and never parted with any thing once gotten, as is manifest to every man that remembers or reads the proceedings of those late Parliaments. Upon these Reasons do I affirm the cause of the dissolution of our late Government to be the distaste given to the Commons; for considering what I have said, you must agree that the safety as well as glory of the King and Royal Family consists in the love of the common people and an intire union between the King and them, for so soon as that ceases by a mutual distrust and hatred each of th' other, it follows of necessity that upon a breach the most powerfull must and will prevail: Now our *English* people are so inclined to the Name of a King that a small matter will not break us in pieces, but many and repeated Acts will and doe, as you may see by the following observations.

In *England* we have our Lives and Liberties secured by a Law, and nothing so grievous to an English Commoner as the breach of that Law; and therefore whatsoever is such, or deemed to be such, is a preparative for murmuring at least, if not greater and louder outcries: Amongst all the Laws we have, there's none that we are more fond of, than that of Juries and Elections, in both which an English-man doth of right demand to be free; the former is apparent in the Article exhibited against the Chief Justice *Scroggs* for discharging a Grand-Jury before they had dispatch'd their business; and this was great cause of clamour at that time. And this brings to my mind the severe Fines they set upon *Harrington*, *Harris* and *Brown*; of which the generality of people, as well as they in particiular, did much complain, and, as I remember, in Parliament too; since which Sir *Samuel Barnardiston* and others have groaned under extravagant Summs, imposed contrary to *Magna Charta's salvo contentemento*, i. e. saving to them

them their livelihoods, sometimes 30000 *l.* sometimes 1000 *l.* and sometimes 100000 *l.* Oh *Monstrum horrendum!* But these things gave disgust to all the Friends and Allies of the persons so pinch't, and extorted the compassion of most others not concerned in the prosecution: These things made people fear it might be their own case, and therefore, as well as for humanity sake, they complained; Wise men look't upon it as a strain, a *triccum in lege*, to inflict perpetual Imprisonment, during life, by a consequence where they could not justify it directly; and this for an idle word many times, and perhaps falsely sworn to. Another thing was their barbarous, cruel and inhumane Whippings of persons through the Streets, (Punishments unheard-of in our Island till invented by Sir *George*) and these damn'd hardships imposed in so cruel a manner as to enjoin a repetition within two or three days after the suffering of the first Penance, while the effects of the last correction was fresh on their backs, and this upon Clergymen too, who can never be deemed Vagabonds and Slaves in a Nation where they have a liberal Education while young, and reverence and maintenance afterwards: this stirred the blood of all English hearts, and occasioned loud complaints; and all this for being Anti-Papists: And after 'twas a ruled Case, that this new punishment was proper for a Misdemeanour, they might construe any thing almost to be such, and the best Commoner in *England* might fall under the Lash as well as a Priest of the Church. And here I would remember you of the infamous Degradation of that worthy Divine *Samuel Johnson*, without Process or Libel, brought in custody by some of the Marshal's Murmidons into their Holiness's presence, and there strip't of his Cassock, and other Habits, as also of the Holy Ghost, because a Bench of Judges had said he was a Libeller, and not an hours time given him to answer: God forgive all them that were concerned in it, whether as Judges or Assistant Divines. Now this being upon a Person of greater Learning, Parts and Integrity than his pretended Judges, it sounded harsh in every Man's

Man's ears; and they themselves afterwards thought their own act so fondly absurd and unjustifiable, as that they did refuse to dispose of his Living without security to save them harmless; and they failing of that, the same remained as it was. The Prosecution of Mr. *Pilkington* with such severity for a word dropt about the Fire, re-kindled the Peoples jealousy that 'twas the Papists who Fired *London*; and this added to the secret aversion of the Common to---- The Murther of Sir *Edmondbury Godfrey* an eminent Magistrate of repute and honour in so bloody and treacherous a manner, the concealing his death, the secreting the Confession of one of his Murtherers, the preferring one of those Concealers, the Assassination of Mr. *Arnold* by treachery upon the like occasion, the doughty prosecution of *Prance* and procuring him to confess himself perjured, together with th' other intrigues of their stifling all manner of crimes which the Papists had committed: these things filled the minds of men with the fears of Massacres and the like, and provok'd an hatred to the persons of them who countenanced such as were like to commit them.

The publick maintaining of a certain Scribler called the *Observer* by Pensions from Court and New-years-gifts from otherwhere, whose business was weekly to palliate Popery, to vilifie Parliaments, and to ridicule the best of men, and upon occasion to raise a Faction by new coin'd terms of distinction and reproach. This was his Employment, and this gave offence to all men, it being thought as really it was a base and mean thing to countenance such a mercenary, who abused others at his pleasure and even by authority. The suppressing and bantering of the murther of the late Earl of *Essex*, both in the Pulpit and on the Bench and at the Barr, and the punishing of those who inquired after it; these and abundance more of such things there were done as created evil surmises.

The Exorbitant damages given upon *Scandalum Magnatum's* ; The severe prosecution of Dissenters on the Penal Laws ; The strained and nonsensical construction of their being riotous Assemblies by a conversion interpretative of their Bibles and Short-hand Writing-books into *gladiis baculis & cul-tellis* : and the unconscionable Fines succeeding those constructions, even greater and beyond whatever our Law-makers intended when they first made them offences : This oppression upon thousands of families became at last the cry of the Country ; besides this, there were the mercifull Commutations at *Doctors-Commons*, which, like the Court of *Rome*, made the Purse pay for the Soul. And here I think I may say, that the true Jesuitical policy was used in encouraging that Persecution to disgrace one party, and provoke the other : The debauching of Parliaments by notorious giving of Pensions and Gratuities, which were all apparent to the People in their voluntary and ready grants of the most oppressive Subsidies and Taxes ; and this they felt and complained of, which practise introduced the subjection of our Court to *France*, as was manifest when the Wisdom of the Nation thought fit to prohibit all *French* Commodities, but without effect, by reason of the perswasion of that gainfull way of argumentation. The Arts used in stopping the Impeachments in Parliament by setting up the Power of a Pardon, and influencing of Votes for its support, were very remarkable, as you may see by the prints of those times ; The sudden Dissolutions of Parliaments gave no less cause of offence ; The Punishment of persons that humbly Petitioned for the Sitting of a Parliament, which is the onely Glory and Happiness of the Nation, as Criminals in Signing them, when 'twas both their Right and Duty so to doe. The base method of procuring Abhorrences was also complained of at that time by the Commons, and not by a Faction, as good Men were then termed by those who were otherwise. Another thing that gave distast, was the stifling of the Plot ; and here I would onely desire you to remember the difference between *Stroggs's* behaviour at *Wake-*

man's and at *Coleman's* Tryal, as you may see it truly, though somewhat satyrically express'd in the Prints of those days. As to the methods used for suppressing that Plot, you cannot have forgot the arts and tricks which were set on foot for that purpose; what Great Men were taken off (as the phrase then was;) how their Zeal and Heat cooled; what Accounts were published of the Letters and other passages; how curtailed, and many particulars omitted, and by whose directions: these things made much grumbling amongst the Commons, especially being after two Parliaments had voted its Truth, and the whole Nation had given its Faith to it, and our publick Services of God had affirmed our belief on't; but the change was sudden, that it caused astonishment to hear the same Tongue one week cajoling, and the next huffing the discoverers of those Treasons. The setting up of certain Sham-plots to ensnare and ruine the soberest part of the Kingdom; and for the better managery thereof, the preparing of Witnesses (to call it no worse) at the Chambers of an Attorney-General, or the two Fiscal Solicitors, or in worse places, viz. Prisons or Gaols, to swear against Persons, the freest both in Reputation and Life, from the suspicion of all such Crimes as were laid to their charge; I say the setting up Witnesses of the basest character for birth, education and fortune, as the *Haines's*, *Wilkinsons* and *Sextons*, and the rest of that damn'd Crew. I need not particularize these matters, because all their circumstances are obvious to every Man's memory: and when these things were thus transacted, most Men began to fear and dread, and consequently to hate their Governours. But this was not all, for Juries as well as Witnesses were tampered with; The packing of Jurors, either Men of dependance, or Men managed and drunk into a resolution of finding *pro rege per fas aut nefas*, right or wrong, all's one, the word is *Guilty*: This frightened the People, and was a plain invasion upon all that a Subject can call his own, for nothing, nor Man was safe so long as such practices last: And, in truth, Jury-men can no ways excuse themselves, for
they

they are on their own Oaths, and their own Souls are at stake upon't ; It is not enough for them to say the Judge directed them, as if the insinuation or bolder direction of a mercenary Lawyer, leapt upon a cushion, could justify a false Verdict ; for Juries are Judges of fact, of Witnesses, of their credibility, and of their testimony, what and how far it goes, and of the Law resulting thereon so far as if they doubt, to find the matter specially or otherwise, and no Judge can Fine them for so doing. And this puts me in mind of four Setts of Juries who deserve a publick censure, I mean *Cornish's*, *Russell's*, *Sydney's*, and the pretended Rioters at *Guild-hall* ; and I hope the Parliament will take notice of them. But here I think fit to observe, that more Families have been ruined within these ten years past by unjust Judges and unrighteous Jurors, than have been benefited by the contrary in twice that time. Add to this the base Solicitations of Grand-Juries : It did exceedingly disturb all thinking honest Men to see an Attorney-General shuffling into a Grand-Jury's Room, in order to delude them into the breach of their Oaths by a false presentment, as every such is, which hath not sufficient, credible and consistent Evidence to support it : Nor was it less odious to hear of a pack of Judges, Counsel, and Solicitors and Witnesses sent on a Journey to procure a Jury to find Bills, and the Judge, Counsel, Clerk, Solicitors, and all to go in and converse with the Jurors in their Debates to solicit and secure the making Presentments as was desired, and immediately posting away an Express to *London* to give notice of the success of their Travels, and afterwards one of the Council to be made Recorder of the place, the other to be Solicitor-General, the Judge advanced into an higher station, and even the very Clerk to be made a Secondary ; and all this as Rewards for such practises. This made every man afraid of every man, and forced some great Patriots, though satisfied of their own integrity, yet afraid of such subornations : this, I say, forced some of them to bribe the State-Ministers for their own preservation ; and others not doing so, fell, according to their

fears, under the claws of those cruel Mutes : These things happening to Men of great Fame for parts, honesty and substance in the World, had no little effect in creating a general dissatisfaction. The precipitate Execution of Sir *Thomas Armstrong* ; the hurrying of an Alderman to a Scaffold ; the haranguing of a learned Gentleman out of his Life ; the Western Persecutions, attended with all the circumstances of treachery, falseness, injustice and haughtiness ; All these, with the inventions of new fine-spun Treasons, and new, delicate, superfine kinds of proof ; All these had a share in preparing the Peoples minds with ill thoughts towards their actual Governours, as particularly in *Sydney's* Tryal, the slightness of the Evidence by comparison of hands, the notion of one circumstantial collateral Witness, and a Closet-publication ; by reason of these, the Judges that approved them, the Council that invented and pressed them, and the Jurors that swore to them did all incur the hatred of the People. As to Corporations, the Representatives of which make a considerable part of the House of Commons ; I confess that the Court did always endeavour so to manage Elections, as to procure some Court-creatures to be chosen their chief Magistrates ; but never was their practise so apparent as in the Case of Mr. *Papilion* and Mr. *Dubois* when chosen Sheriffs for *London*, having upwards of 2700 of Hands, and *North* had onely 107, and Mr. *Box* 1353 ; the particulars thereof are yet remaining in most Mens memories ; the continued solicitations by promise and menace of a weak Major by a *Quondam* Secretary ; the behaviour of some Court-ridden Aldermen ; the behaviour and falshood of a Sword-bearer and Common Cryer absolutely devoted to the then late Recorder's Commands, and the actions of the Common Serjeant in that particular were very notorious, for which some of them had Pensions granted and paid by the Ministers of that Prince ; the refusal to swear them Sheriffs according to Law and Custome ; the putting up a *North*, whose Brother was to be his Guide, and himself rewarded with a considerable Office, and another whose Fortunes

tunes made him dependent on the Court at that time, though since returned to soberer thoughts; and this when a worthy Citizen, sensible of the sinister practises in that Election, refused to act under it, and willingly paid his Fine rather than approve such innovations: Now I say this Violation of the Rights of the City of *London* gave a disturbance not to a few, as the ruine of a particuiar Man or Family doth, but to the whole City and Nation, when'twas apparent, that the design was to procure Juries who would find Bills against any Popular Patriot of his Countrey upon any pretence of Plotting, and accordingly to awe Mankind into an intire submission to the Arbitrary Power of some great Men, and wiser Heads saw the intrigue to reach further than that, which was to have it under their influence, that such Members should be returned in Parliament for the City as pleased the then Governours; and this was in fact a plain essay to the subversion of the Government. Then followed the *Quo Warranto* against the City of *London*, which gave an alarum to the whole Realm, for then we saw no manner of Right was secure; for from our written Law, and by Oral Tradition from our Fathers, we had learned that Corporations were not forfeitable, and the Mode of managing that affair gave much discontent: First, we all knew that the whole Nation would follow *London's* fate, and we saw they designed to have it when they removed a Chief Justice, because he refused a concurrence, and another was put in his place, the meanness of whose Birth made him not to regard futurities or airy things, but his own present enjoyment of a warm place, and it was, in truth, but present; for when his Opinion was delivered by another Judge, he was *quasi mortuus*, senseless, and so continued till he died. This, in effect, made the King master of two thirds of the House of Commons; then were Charters taken or surrendred everywhere, new ones granted with new-fashioned Clauses in them, reserving Power to turn in or out at pleasure, and the gravest and soberest Magistrates removed, &c. This laid a foundation
for.

for the methods used by the Popish Successor. In my opinion this was one of the most mischievous things that ever *Westminster-Hall* did; and all concerned in it deserve truly the title of betrayers of the *English* Liberties. We have seen the damnable effects of the being removeable at pleasure, which hath occasioned so many base compliances, whereof many have since repented, I wish all may doe so. Besides this, the business of *Fitz-harris* did much discontent the Commons, though the Lords rejected the Impeachment, and the hanging of Souldiers for Felons in desertion. These matters caused mutterings and complaining in our streets. But I had almost forgot our Clergymens Pensions and Preferments to force their Preaching that in the Name of the Lord, which the *Observer* published in his own. In those days, whosoever strained highest for the King's Prerogative, was first advanced, tho' he crackt three or four of God's Commandments to doe it. The boldest strokes always acquired the fattest Benefices: A Dignity was the certain Reward of a brisk exhortation to Slavery. It made the word *Loyal* nauseous, for some years you could not hear a word about Faith or Repentance, but instead of those old puritanical Precepts, there succeeded the modish Doctrines of Obedience and Non-resistance, which spoiled more good Christians than ever it made good Subjects; then young men went to Church to hear News, and wise men tarried at home to reade their Bibles. In short, since 1679. the Churchmens Sermons on one side outdoe the Dissenters Sayings on the other by a bar and half, and yet since that time, some of the same Men have made an attonement for such their folly by their vigorous opposition of Popery; which brings me to the consideration of the Suspension of the Bishop of *London*, a Priest of a noble Family, a vertuous Life and eminent Character, as an Anti-Papist, and therefore suspended for not suspending the best of Preachers, and that without any colour of Law, either for their Jurisdiction or Proceeding, as any man who reads his case may observe.

observe. This turned our Clergy into their right wits, and filled our Pulpits with the same Complaints, which before onely filled Lay-mens mouths. The suspending and turning out the Fellows of *Magdalen* Colledge, and decreeing them incapable of a Livelihood, when they first took away that which they had: this being a palpable violation of right made every *Englishman* a party Complainant. The prosecution of the Seven Bishops set all the Kingdom in a flame, for then the Nation, that part which was before blind, began to see through Popish intrigues. The forcing of the Declaration to be read in Churches made that odious, which was before entertained with a favourable conception in most mens minds. The Closetting of Officers, the regulating of Corporations, sending about Regulators, erecting of Popish Chappels, setting up Popish Schools, and preferring of Popish Officers, and the like. These things set the people agog; but that which was the foundation of these last Grievances was the Judgment for the Dispensing power; a Judgment in it self ill and procured in an ill manner, by packing a dozen Judges, and knowing their opinions beforehand, and turning out those who dissented, and putting in a parcel of Blockheads who should agree. These and abundance more which I cannot remember were the occasions of the Revolt: And now I leave you to judge whether there were not provocations sufficient to alienate mens minds from a Crown that thus endeavoured to subvert their Elections, debauch their forms of Tryals, and get the Lives and Liberties of all the people to be at their mercy; and what is more, to shamm them into a damn'd nonsensical sort of Irreligion instead of their Bible-worship and Doctrine professed and established in *England*. And now I hope you'll not wonder that our people did first distrust, then hate, and then leave the King: Nor can you think it strange that they should be able to effect this change, when you consider the former part of my Letter, for though you may imagine the ballance of Land not to be so steady a

Rule

Rule whereby to judge where the Nations strength lies, since Trade increases; and Money multiplies in our Island, yet that still augments the Power of the Commons of *England*; and you may believe me for once, the Commons have and are the strength of the Nation, and have now, and always will prevail; and there's nothing can settle their minds, and secure our peace, but a free current of the Law for the future, without any interposition of the humours and interests of the Governor or Governors to incline it one way or another in any Case, civil or criminal, whatsoever; and perhaps a General Act of Indemnity, and some further encouragements to Trade for a security against Idleness in the more inferiour sort of people; and a Disbanding of the Armies may be necessary. But I have exceeded the limits of a Letter already, otherwise I should have proceeded to have shewn you which part of the Commons is the strongest, and the proper means to quiet them, and please all, and with whom 'tis the interest of the actual Governors to joyn. But, &c.

Windfor, Dec.
22. 1688.

S I R,

I am yours, &c.

F I N I S.

